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VOTE NO ON ARTICLE 38

Stephen Harrington <sth.alist@gmail.com>
Draft

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May 25, 2022
Town Meeting Moderator Greg Christiana
Town of Arlington
730 Mass Avenue
Arlington, MA 02476

Dear Mr. Moderator and Town Meeting Members,

My name is Joe Kerble and I am a Town Meeting Member. I am submitting the attached letter on behalf of Stephen Harrington urging a NO vote on Article 38.

The views expressed here are Stephen Harrington's own. I not just acknowledge our collective constitutional rights, I seek to protect them.

Thank you,

Joe Kerble
Town Meeting Member, Precinct 13

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Vote NO on Article 38.

The driving force behind land use in Arlington and improvements to private property over the past two decades has been the conversion of 2-family, 3-family and multi-unit properties to condominiums. [Look it up](#);

Use	FY2002	FY2022	change
2-family	2809	2081	-728
3-family	242	77	-165
condos	2002	3972	+1970

$165 \text{ (3-families)} * 3 + 728 \text{ (2-families)} * 2 = 1951$ compared to 1970 new condominiums over the past two decades. Compare that to the 82 additional single family homes (+1%) over the same 2002-2022 time frame.

Condominiums are starter homes in Arlington. Condos are the prevalent homes in urban centers. Condos represent the vast majority of housing development in Arlington. Condos are relatively affordable, owner occupied housing in Arlington.

Further, there have been a total of five (5!) two-family homes built in Arlington in the last 23 years.

address	use	year_built	last_sale_date
63 -65 LANCASTER RD	104	2021	2020-08-28
107 FAIRMONT ST	104	2020	2017-08-31
13 -15 CHESTNUT ST	104	2016	2015-03-31
193 -195 FOREST ST	104	2007	2005-02-23
6 -8 PINE CT	104	1999	2021-04-29

Five new 2-family homes built in Arlington in 23 years. Two additional 3-families over the same time period.

The proponent and supporters marketing Article 38 as "2-families allowed by right" is just, umm, what's the phrase for advocacy that has no basis in reality used to sway decisions made on emotion and not critical understanding?

Strike 1. Article 38 has nothing to do with creating 2-family dwellings.

The loss of almost two thousand rental units has implications for a town that has a large fraction of renters. Article 38 does nothing to address rental demand. The discussion about rental properties disappearing in Arlington is remarkably absent.

Economics of condo conversions

There seems to be a deficient understanding about the economics of the conversion of 2-family and 3-family dwellings to condominiums combined with an often spoken, and definitely unsavory, myth of the greedy developer/builder.

Did the town (planning department), Article 38 proponents or any of you demonstrate the economics behind condo-conversions? Have you calculated the land, building costs and the monetization of rental income cash flows to determine developer profits?

Can you? I have for Arlington. Developer profits are (mostly) that monetization of rental income cash flows over an ever decreasing time horizon.

Sure, some number of condo conversions leave the original owner of the 2-family in place, when that owner has the capital, skills and patience for extensive renovations within the existing shell providing that owner with an injection of cash. Do you have the capital and skills to do that? Are these the greedy developers we hear about? It is no wonder many 2-family homeowners give up a portion of that income stream for immediate cash.

Many of Arlington's 2-family and 3-family dwellings are beyond their useful economic life and overwhelming replaced with newly constructed condominiums. As well, the replacement of older single family homes with

newer single family homes that are larger makes sense- since homes function as more than just bedrooms and a kitchen now.

So who are these greedy developers?

Well, many developers are residents of Arlington, often doing a series of properties on one street, sometimes where they also live.

One of the most prolific developers in condo conversions is a Town Meeting Member. Some of your elected officials are real estate lawyers. The business of Arlington is real estate. These professionals understand the economics of the building developments in Arlington. Did you ask their opinions? Will any of them acknowledge a conflict of interest and recuse themselves from the vote on Article 38?

Have you considered that a factor in housing development in Arlington are these small-time, under capitalized, local developers? With debacles like Symmes and Mugar how much capital do you think Arlington can attract to build enough new housing to address the regional demand?

You think Town Meeting collectively or even individually can articulate the economics of development? Certainly Article 38 has not.

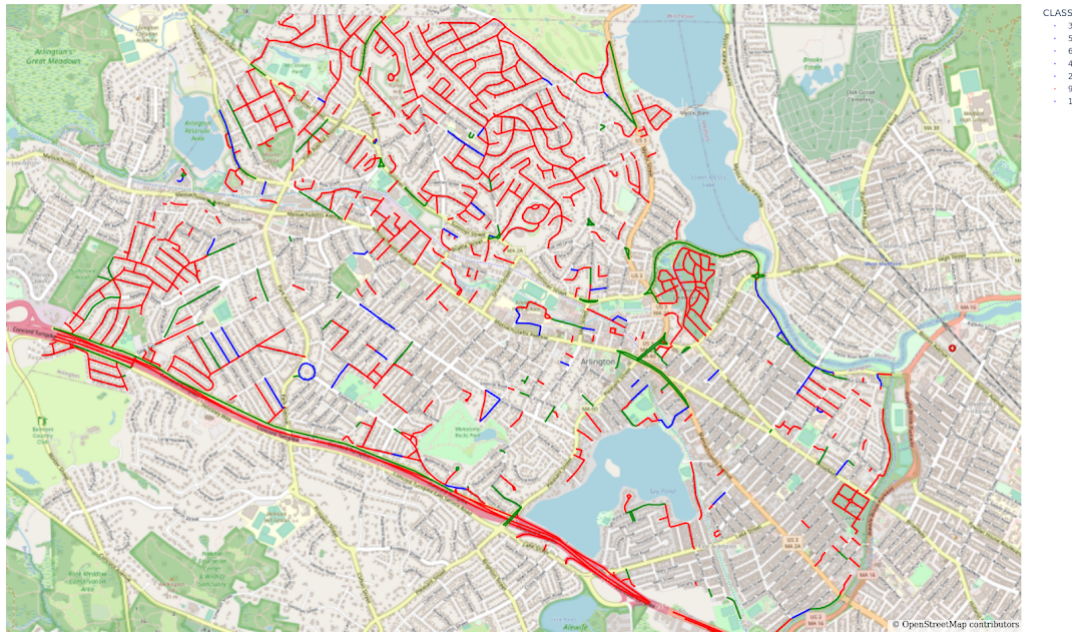
Strike 2.

Infrastructure

The opponents of Article 38 expressed fear over the incursion of 2-family (omg rentals!) into single family neighborhoods. At least that argument was abandoned once debunked. Unfortunately, Article 38 supporters, including the Town, have failed to address the financial impact increasing density in Arlington's R0 and R1 zones will entail. Let's discuss sidewalks and roads.

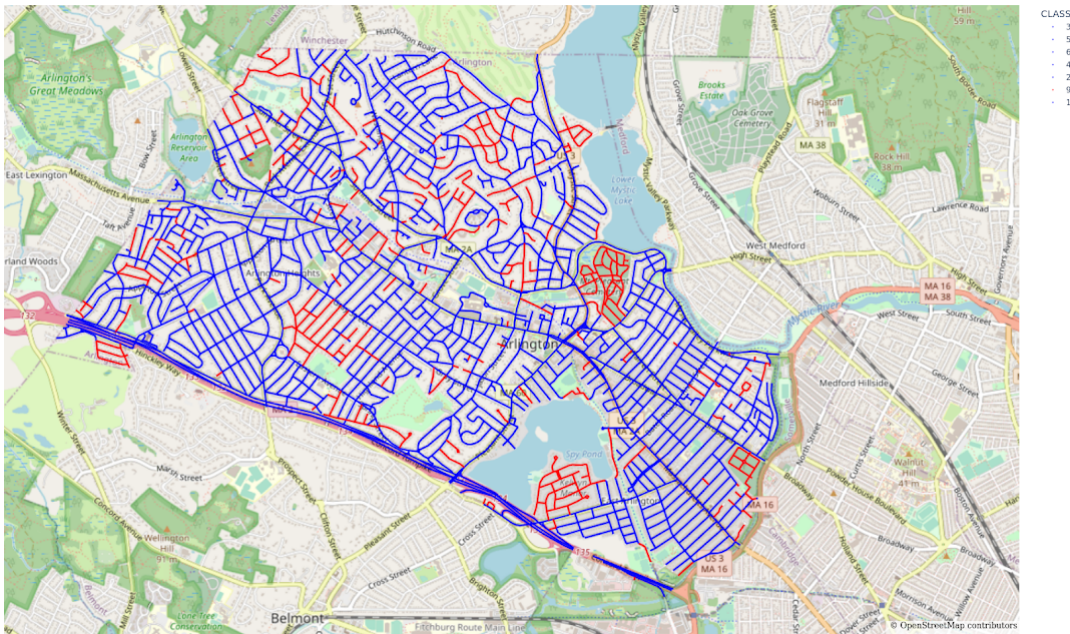
Attached are two images. The first image shows, in red, the streets that have no sidewalks in Arlington. Notice that the entirety of the R0 zone has few sidewalks. The two major secondary roads that serve R0 - Ridge St and Hutchinson Road along the Winchester Country Club - have little to no sidewalks. These

steep streets have seen horrific accidents in the past. Increasing density will require Arlington to install about 50 miles of sidewalks in single family zones. About \$15M.



Unlike East Arlington, there is little bike infrastructure, shops or public transportation in R0 and many other R1 zones in the hilly parts of Arlington. Increased density in these zones will result in an increase in car trips on Arlington roads.

Speaking of roads in Arlington, many roads in R0 and R1 zones are private ways. Below is a map, showing in red the private ways in Arlington; again concentrated in the hilly single family zones.



These private ways are in atrocious condition. Watch someday as school officials and the public school bus travel over the crater filled Cutter Hill Road (and others) on their way to AHS. One divot that spans the entire width (<10') is 2 feet deep. That narrow passage way is shared by bikers, elementary school children on foot and about one car per minute during rush hours, of course with no sidewalk.

The Town Manager, reportedly was "advised" by a financial gadfly turned elected official, not to fill the potholes on private ways a couple of years ago. Now these roads are in atrocious condition.

Why would the Town advocate for increased density *before* addressing critical infrastructure needs? Why are we waiting for a tragedy *before* providing safety that is needed now in those areas?

The cost to bring 25 miles oi private ways to public safety standards is on the order of \$30M.

Voting to increase housing density *before* providing public safety infrastructure is short-sighted.

Strike 3.

I urge you to vote **NO** on Article 38.

Stephen Harrington
Columbia Road